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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ways kindergarten teachers can help improve the writing skills of their students who are hesitant to write. The paper describes a project that modified the physical classroom environment, nurtured the emotional climate, and used other strategies, such as allowing more time to write, modeling functional writing, and valuing all forms of writing. A copy of the project brochure created to inform parents of ways they can help their child become a confident writer at home is included. The paper then presents six case studies of hesitant kindergarten writers that document their writing progress and highlight the importance of the environmental issues in improving writing skills. These issues include the child's perception of him- or herself as a writers, the teacher's perception of the student, parent participation in the process, and the role of the environment in which children's perceptions of themselves as writers can flourish. Original observation records with notes and anecdotal notes are included. (Contains 24 references.) (JPB)

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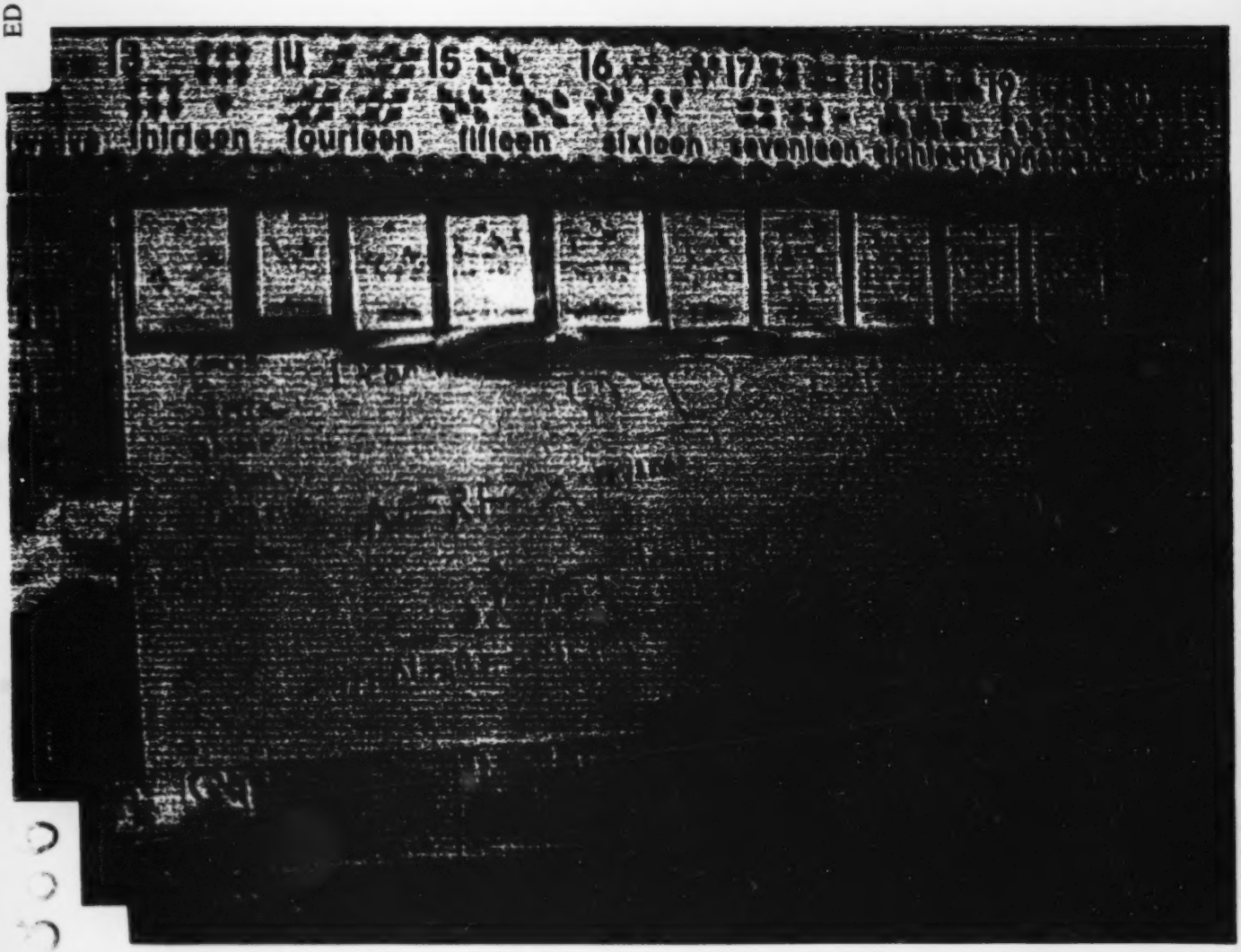
How Can We Help Hesitant Kindergarten Writers Become Risk Takers?



For

ED 661 Young Children And Literacy, 1998

By Lora T. Sterling, Suzanne Martin & Sandra Lyons

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Abstract

Each year kindergarten teachers are faced with students who are hesitant to write. We become frustrated and often put pressure on the students to write in some form in addition to a picture. Our project examines ways that teachers can help these children become risk takers in writing. The attitudes and expectations we hold about kindergartners as writers are discussed. As a result of our research, we modified the physical environment, nurtured the emotional climate, and utilized other strategies. These strategies included allowing more time to write, modeling functional writing, and valuing all forms of writing. Because parent involvement may be crucial to a student's attitude about his/her writing ability before entering kindergarten, we have created a brochure that informs parents of ways they can help their child become a confident writer at home. Through our research we discovered the child's view of him/herself as a writer is most important to his/her writing success. The teacher's perception of the child as a hesitant writer are secondary to the child's own belief in him/herself as a writer. However, the teacher is responsible for providing an environment in which the child's perception of him/herself as a writer can flourish.

We present six case studies of hesitant kindergarten writers in our classrooms.

Question

For several years we have noticed that there are students in our kindergarten classes who are hesitant to write. When asked to write they often exclaim, "I can't write", or, "I don't know how to write." We are disturbed when these children leave our classrooms still unwilling to take a risk in writing. We wish we could have done more for these students. When we began this class about children's literacy, our attention became focused on these students and what we could do to help them. Thus, our question for this project has become:

How can we help hesitant kindergarten writers become risk takers?

Review of the Literature

Understanding Children's Writing

We begin our review with a brief discussion about how children learn to write. It is possible to gather a bunch of activities that may spark the interest of young writers but how can we truly encourage them and appreciate their writing if we do not understand the process of how children's writing develops? We are much more able to help children become risk-takers in writing if we have a firm understanding about how children learn to become literate. When we understand how children learn, we create students with a strong literacy foundation upon which to build (Mills & Clyde, 1991).

As children become literate, we assume that they are becoming both readers and writers. Although our focus of this paper is on writing, we do not intend to ignore or diminish the importance of reading in the literacy process. It is almost impossible to have a discussion of one without the other because reading and writing are, "equal sides of the same coin", (Walshe, 1981). Reading and writing are not separate in a child's learning, nor do they develop sequentially. Instead, the processes are mutually supportive of one another. The more children read, the more they learn about writing and the more children write, the more they learn about reading (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Sulzby & Teale, 1985; Martinez & Teale, 1987).

Many educators and parents mistakenly believe that children must pass through a sequence of clearly defined skills before writing can occur. They assume that young children must learn how to read before they can write. As a result, young children are not encouraged to write until they have mastered reading and the mechanics of writing (Maehr, 1984; Walshe, 1981). Although no one truly can understand how a child learns to write, is clear that the child needs to construct his/her knowledge about how writing works. In other words, learning to write is largely an act of discovery rather than a skill taught to a child directly by the teacher (Temple, et al, 1993). In fact, it is natural for a young child to express himself in print through drawing, scribbling or other writing forms. When children are given freedom to write, they use a trial-and-error approach to make sense of written language. They try out their current theories about written language while they practice writing, much as they try out their understanding of oral language as they practice talking (Danielson, 1992; Fields & Spangler, 1995). The earlier that they begin to try out writing, the more confidence they will have when they enter the school setting.

The importance of writing at home before a child comes to school cannot be overemphasized . The key to becoming a risk-taker may well begin in the home. Through examining studies (Maeher, 1984; Sulzby, et al, 1989; Walshe, 1981) of the home environment from which confident young writers come, we have compiled a list of behaviors that occur frequently in these homes:

1. Children are simply invited to pick up a writing utensil and begin writing the words of their oral language.
2. Children are given sufficient time for writing so they can experience it at many levels across time.
3. Writing events are aesthetically pleasing or entertaining, and not just functional as an information exchange or task performing level. Children and parents are both having fun!
4. Children's early writing forms are accepted and not viewed as mistakes. Instead, young children are encouraged to write without worrying about the mechanics of writing.
5. Children are writing for real reasons.

It feels wonderful when entering kindergarten children come to us from a rich literacy home environment. These are the children who are most often not afraid to write from the first day of school. They plunge ahead with gusto as if writing is the most natural things in the world. We know that, for the most part, these children will continue to move ahead to conventional forms of writing and will have very meaningful things to say within their writing. But what about those children who come from a background with limited writing experiences? Granted, some of these children may beat the odds and be risk-takers from the start. But what do we do if they walk through our door afraid to pick up a pencil for fear of getting it "wrong?" We will attempt to answer this question in the remaining sections of our paper.

Kindergarten Writing

In order to encourage kindergarten children to write, we must appreciate each step in their development by making sure that our own expectations for them are realistic. Often, kindergarten teachers have misconceptions about the levels of development they should expect in their classrooms such as thinking that all children should be using invented spelling before they leave our classroom. This is not at all accurate. Studies have shown that at the beginning of the kindergarten year, the most typical forms of writing continue to be scribbling, drawing and random letter strings. The letter strings may seem random to the untrained teacher who does not understand the development of writing, but actually the child writer has put much thought into his/her writing. Both the quantitative principle (a certain number of letters are needed for a word) and the qualitative principle (words are made up of strings of different letters) are important theories that a child creates which shows his/her serious thought process (Ferreiro, 1990). As the year progresses, we may begin to see several students using early phonemic writing. Some may even be writing in more advance phonemic forms or invented spelling with fewer beginning to write in conventional forms but these are the exceptions, not the rule (Sulzby, et al, 1989; Maehr, 1984; Temple,et al, 1993).

Where a child is in writing development depends on the knowledge and experiences about writing that he/she brings to the classroom. Even though it is good to have a general idea of where kindergartners may be when they enter and leave our class, it is important to remember that our expectations of children are determined by our

knowledge of each child's background and progress. No matter where each child is in the writing process, we can rejoice with her over approximations of intent just as we do with a toddler who makes an imprecise attempt at saying a new word (Fields & Spangler, 1995). We know that this is easier said than done, but children will know if we really accept their writing by our tone of voice, the way we act and our willingness to share or have the child share it with others.

We know that kindergarten writing takes on a variety of forms. However, what we must realize is that these forms are fluid and flexible instead of a set sequence that children pass through as they reach toward their goal of conventional (adult) writing. Children often move back and forth across the forms of writing well into 1st grade. The more complex the content, the less energy the child may expend on the writing form. Often, a child reverts to a lower appearing form such as scribble or drawing. This can happen even if a child knows how to write in more advanced forms such as beginning phonemic writing (Sulzby, et al, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1985). For example, a kindergartner may use invented spelling in writing a list but choose to scribble when writing a complex story. Each form of writing can be appreciated by the knowledgeable adult because, "children who show indications of imbalance, (using both invented spelling and scribbling), appear to be at periods of transition or growth. Regression is actually a sign of progress" (Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990 p213).

Another way that we can understand children's writing progress is by not only examining the appearance of the writing form they use but also the underlying concepts of written language that a child understands. Children may produce strings of letters or even correct spelling while holding immature concepts about written language. For example, children who follow scribble with their finger while rereading, who are able to make the speech sound like reading, and who end their story when they reach the end of the scribble are showing very advanced literacy behaviors despite the use of so called lower forms of writing. (Sulzby, et al, 1989). One might easily say what a great writer a child is who writes many words by memory, copies print from around the room or even uses phonemic writing. However, when he/she exclaims, "I can't read it" or writes the same words over and over again, his underlying concepts may be far less sophisticated than what the writing form may lead one to believe (Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990). So, as we continue to examine the writing of our students, it is important to remember both the nature of the writing and the nature of the underlying concepts and behaviors of that writing (Dyson, 1985).

We may encourage and accept writing of various forms in our classroom while still wondering to ourselves, "How long will this child stay in this writing form?" and "When will they be writing in conventional form?" Most kindergartners are aware that their writing forms are not the way adults write. However, when they see adults writing, they want to write too and are more likely to self-initiate writing. This continuous cycle of watching what adults write and wanting to be like them serves as a motivator to write more like adults do (Schwartz, 1989). The section on modeling writing will explore ways that adults can help children to write.

There is a great deal of reading going on when a child writes. Because children learn to read their writing and do a lot of it, reading and writing continually reinforce each other and become a motivator for each other (Walshe, 1981). The desire to have others read what they write also becomes a major impetus for children to learn more about spelling and punctuation and keeps them striving towards models of conventional print (Fields and Spangler, 1995). Children may sometimes experience tears and frustration as they work towards adult writing. Though these can be positive parts of development when they come from the children's own initiatives and exploration, kindergarten teachers should avoid being the cause of them (Sulzby, et al, 1989). It is important to let natural pressure through a student's own intrinsic motivation, move invention toward correctness while supporting it all along the way.

Establishing An Environment for Writing

As each school year begins, we cannot control what kinds of students will come through our door. Perhaps we'll have several students who don't want to write or are afraid to write. Several children may never have picked up a crayon or a pencil. Do we throw up our hands and give up or do we accept these children and find ways to help them become confident writers? "Children can be taught to be poor writers or good writers. The role of the teacher is crucial, especially for children who have less opportunity or inclination to learn to write at home" (Fillion, et al, 1987). There are ways that we can arrange our classroom to help all children to become confident writers.

The Physical Environment

Children learn to write by writing in an environment that is full of writing, just as children learn to talk by talking in an environment that is full of talk (Fillion,et al, 1987). Surrounded by books, writing materials and other writers, children see the need for both reading and writing and they experience the pleasures accompanying these activities (Danielson, 1985). There is no substitute for a well-stocked kindergarten library. Besides beginning emergent books, there should be books and reading materials available that cover a wide variety of genres including fiction and non-fiction literature, newspapers, magazines, phone books, etc. The more enticing reading material we have in our classroom, the more print and uses of writing our students can explore. However, it is not enough for children to just look at print. They must hear the sound of words written down. Kindergarten teachers must remember that we must read regularly, on a daily basis to children.

Great literature can be a springboard for great writing. A good book can help children develop their ideas more fully which may influence them to use more sophisticated writing strategies (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Martinez, et al, 1989). The best literature discusses experiences that frequently touch response chords in children and launch them into writing about their own experiences.

Models of conventional writing at children's height around the room are the essential partner to exploration with writing. This partnership provides the framework for all writing instruction. (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Temple, et al, 1993). Environmental print such as letter charts, word walls, posters, signs, labels and children's names can all help to

inspire a child to write on his own. It also serves as a model of how writing looks as well as how it works. The writing done by a teacher can be displayed to show the importance and different functions of writing.

Most kindergarten teachers create a special environment for writing called a writing center. Children can come to write or collect materials for writing. If the children choose to write at the center it should be a place where children feel free to write in their own way (Maehr, 1984). Suggested materials for a writing center may include;

pencils	markers	crayons
pens	glue	stapler
tape	paper clips	stamp pads
envelopes	junk mail items	lots and lots of different kinds of paper
alphabet at eye level		alphabet and other books

(Fields & Spangler, 1995; Temple, et al, 1993; Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990).

No matter what type of writing center exists in a classroom, all writing materials should be in clearly marked containers and easily accessible to the children. When we provide an abundance of supplies for our students, we treat them as authors and they begin to see themselves in that way. Children should be given many opportunities to use these materials during the day (Schwartz, 1989; Sulzby, et al, 1989).

The Risk-Taking Environment

Probably the single most important element in creating a good emotional tone in the classroom is the teacher. A teacher who is enthusiastic, confident, supportive, kind and fair yet firm, is apt to have students who are responsive, interested and involved writers. (Schwartz, 1989). Although this may seem like a pretty tall order, there are things that we can do to help achieve such a positive atmosphere within our class.

Creating a risk-taking environment for young writers takes a great deal of knowledge, work and patience on our part. We know from observing them, that, "being a risk-taker is a conspicuous trait of prolific writers and risk-takers are not fearful" (Fields & Spangler, 1995, p 151). If we want everyone in our class to be a risk-taker, we must take on the awesome responsibility of giving our students the freedom from fear to write on the very first day of school.

Introducing writing on the first day of school establishes it as a part of the daily activities of life in the classroom and also helps to alleviate initial reluctance to write. One suggestion for beginning the process is to have students observe as we write a message to them. We can then read it to the students and ask them if they can read it. When they respond in the negative, explain that even though they can't read what we wrote, it is nonetheless real writing. Continue to explain that others may not be able to read what they've written but they will be able to read their own writing and can read it to others (Martinez & Teale, 1987).

It is important that we not model early forms of students' writing. We would no more want to do this than model how children talk. Instead, showing writing samples from former kindergarten students can be very powerful. When we "read" these samples to the class we must not mislead student's by saying "It says..." but rather, say, "Susie read it to me like this...". Not only are we modeling authentic children's writing, but we are also modeling how they read their writing! Modeling writing through a puppet might be a clever way of showing how children write if no children's samples are available.

By encouraging children to write in their own way, teachers assure that the writing process as a whole does not stand or fall on children's knowledge of conventional writing (Maehr, 1984). The language we use to encourage children to become risk-takers and decision makers can be very important in getting kids to write in their own way. Examples of encouraging adult talk are, "Write however seems right to you and don't worry about adult spelling for now", or, "It doesn't have to be like grown-up writing, just do it your own way" (Fields & Spangler, 1995; Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990).

We can't forget to publicly admire children's writing forms. When teachers respond positively to all efforts of written language, not only are we showing children that we accept their writing but they learn that the decision to take a risk with writing was worthwhile. Whether you're a child or an adult, a kindergartner or a teacher, risking error requires acceptance and encouragement (Taylor, 1996). Criticism and attention to errors during kindergartners' first shaky attempts can discourage further efforts to make sense of writing (Fields & Spangler, 1995). If young children are to become confident writers, then adults must be as enthusiastic about their early writing as they are with the beginning of oral language (Danielson, 1985).

Sometimes we think we can help a child by responding to their pleas of "I can't write" or, "I don't know how", by writing for them. However, teachers who consistently give in to these pleas by writing for the child will have students who soon learn that the teacher believes the child cannot write (Maehr, 1984). It is crucial that from the very first day of school we leave the control of the writing with the child. (Walshe, 1981).

So then, what do we do when a child cries for help and we will not write for the child? It may not be easy at first but when we encourage our students to write their own way, day after day, and genuinely admire any attempt at writing, we are building a strong classroom community in which the teacher trusts the students to learn and the students trust each other to share in the learning process (Salvage & Brazee, 1991). When students and teachers trust each other, it not only strengthens the children's ability to learn but the teacher's ability to teach (Walshe, 1981).

We can model risk-taking when we try to show that we accept our own mistakes during various school activities. Often when we try something new, it can result in a mistake such as a missed word in a new song or poem we are trying to learn. Calling attention to our own errors can help children become more accepting of themselves as beginning writers (Fields & Spangler, 1995). Laughing at yourself and with your students is a great

way to show that making mistakes or even approximations is no big deal. We can teach children that it's better to try and to make a mistake than to never try something at all. It also shows our students that they are in a non-pressured environment for learning. The message we send through our example is loud and clear; it's okay not to be perfect because see, even your teacher isn't perfect! This can be very beneficial to those children whose concern to get it right is getting in the way of their ability to explore and learn about the written language.

As we continue to work toward a climate of acceptance and risk-taking in our classrooms, our students will take risks and experiment if they know that their efforts will be appreciated (Schwartz, 1989). However, even in the most supportive classrooms, we mustn't despair if a young child sometimes does not want to write. The same reluctance is a commonplace for many students in every writing class, even voluntary adult classes (Walshe, 1981).

Authentic and Purposeful Writing

Writers of all ages write best when they have personally meaningful purposes to write. The purpose doesn't matter, as long at it's a purpose the child cares about. When children begin to write, they usually start by writing in a practical rather than an imaginative way. We can make writing more meaningful in our kindergarten by continuing where the child might have left off at home, writing for "real-world' or authentic purposes rather than contrived school purpose (Fields & Spangler, 1995). Miltz (1985), identified 5 uses or functions of early writing and examples of each:

1. Establishing ownership or identity- labeling things with own name
2. Building relationships- messages, notes, invitations, cards, letters
3. Remembering or Recalling-Christmas lists, grocery and other kinds of lists
4. Recording Information-copying titles of books read or writing observations from experiments
5. Fantasy or Pretending-a play script, story, or any writing done while playing or pretending.

We have a responsibility to help our students write in personally meaningful ways. "The classroom that helps children find reasons to write and then gives them the freedom to do so is the classroom that fosters children's understandings and produces proud and capable young writers" (Fields & Spangler, 1995, p 140).

Play

Kindergarten teachers cannot overlook the importance of play in the writing development of their students. Even for our most hesitant writers, play may provide the vehicle that can encourage them to take risks to write where they may have been too fearful at other times of the day (Fields & Spangler, 1995). Research shows that dramatic play provides an important context in which young children can display their growing knowledge of the everyday functional uses of print. We may see children writing signs for a class grocery store or a menu for a restaurant. When we provide the setting, materials and appropriate time for play in our classroom, we can observe writing efforts

that may provide us with essential information of what a child knows about writing (Vukelich, 1992).

Drawing

It can be difficult for us to view drawing as a form of writing but its importance cannot be diminished. Drawing is, "One of the most significant activities for developing the foundation of literacy in the early years..." (Connell, 1987, p31). Drawing can provide the details and elaboration that young children may not be able to communicate through writing in other forms. Even when a child writes in different forms, drawing serves as a prewriting process as a child thinks through an idea by illustrating it first.

Scaffolding the Hesitant Writer

We have examined different attitudes, environments and purposes for writing that can help reluctant writers to become more confident in their abilities. However, there is much more both we and our students can do in our classrooms to continue to encourage the non risk-takers.

Modeling

We talked a bit about modeling on the first day of school. However, our students need to see us model conventional writing every single day. The central message teachers get across to children when they write in front of them is that writing is important. It is a worthy use of time (Temple, et al, 1993). Children who still have a fear of writing after a risk-taking environment has been established, need frequent demonstrations of the uses and functions of the written word. The teacher, as the expert writer must provide these demonstrations as often as possible (Martinez, et al, 1989). We must keep in mind that children need models for writing, just as they needed models for learning to talk. (Fields & Spanger, 1995).

Modeling various types of writing is crucial for helping children find a purpose that is meaningful to them. We should model the process of creating daily journal entries, charts lists, signs, notes, letters, posters, newsletters, etc. The list is endless. (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). It is our responsibility to consistently model writing for each child so that he/she is able to discover for herself, a function of writing for which he/she finds worth taking a risk.

When modeling types of writing, it is more meaningful to both teacher and student if we model writing for authentic purposes that arise during school. Modeling writing in front of students is important but we also need to model our reason to write. For example; "Kyle is sick today. I think I will make him a card. Maybe it will cheer him up a bit". This prewriting thinking out loud can help children think about their own reasons to write.

Reading to children frequently and consistently is an important way to provide a model of conventional writing. We can talk about the authors as real writers. We can discuss the words and pictures that the author chose to write a particular story. Giving children opportunities to explore print in books either with a partner or alone can give additional experience with these models of writing

Dictation is a model of writing that we can use occasionally as an alternative to children writing themselves. When children come to kindergarten, they understand that the oral symbols via speech have meaning. However, most children need to learn that the same meaning can also be encoded in written language (Schwartz, 1989). Dictation along with many, many other experiences with print can help them understand this connection between speaking and writing. When they see their oral language written down immediately, they gradually learn to make this essential speech-to-print connection which is crucial in their literacy development (Danielson, 1985; Schwartz, 1989).

Taking dictation for children who write for themselves can be compared to reading to children who can read for themselves. Just as children listen to us read, children can observe us writing their own words if we sit beside them and say their words as we write them down (Fields & Spangler, 1995). Dictation can be very time consuming but it is worth the effort. Taking dictation for a group of children about a shared experience can also be very valuable and a timesaving way to model writing for students.

In the school setting, it is the teacher who promotes the idea of the importance of writing. When children observe us writing in order to accomplish real tasks, they learn the value and the function of writing. Through our constant modeling we can demonstrate to students the importance of writing for success at school and success in the world (Walshe, 1981; Maehr, 1984).

Time

Kindergarten teachers should provide times for writing in their classrooms every day. The case for doing so is indisputable. Writing, with all its complex relationships, has to be constructed by the learner rather than taught directly by the teacher. This is why writing needs daily practice in the same way learning to talk needed it (Walshe, 1981). We need to make sure that children have plenty of time to explore different forms and functions of writing. When we allow only short periods of time, children feel pressured to "get it done" in a hurry and are less likely to make a personal investment in the writing process.

We also need to allow time for our students to develop and grow as writers. Working with hesitant writers requires an abundance of patience and trust on our part. We must refrain from setting up an artificial time line for our students to get to another level of writing development. This only can cause our hesitant writers to become even more unwilling to take a risk!

Choosing A Topic

Rather than having us assign a writing topic, children need to be able to choose their own topics. When children self-generate topics that they truly want to write about, the issues of motivation and focusing take care of themselves (Martinez & Teale, 1987). We can aid children in choosing meaningful topics by helping them draw on personal experiences. Asking focused questions or making a class list or personal list of ideas with pictures helps reluctant writers to recall recent experiences and get started writing more quickly and confidently (Schwarz, 1989). However, it may take time before the teacher and the child, working together, can come up with the best topic that the child can use. Choosing a topic is a learning situation (Walshe, 1981).

Conferencing

We should talk to individual kindergartners about their writing on a regular basis. When we meet with each student one on one, it gives us a chance to focus on that child as a writer, ask questions and make positive comments about his writing. By concentrating on the child's own work, we shift the standard of comparison from his classmates to himself. How well Johnny is doing is judged by how well Johnny has done (Schwartz, 1989).

When we conference with a child we can ask him/her to tell us or teach us about the subject he/she chose to write about. We should never imply a greater knowledge of the topic than the child possesses. The purpose of this is to foster a bursting desire to inform. (Walshe, 1981).

Peers

We need to offer children opportunities to work alone or with peers. When we encourage interaction with peers and allow children their natural inclination to discuss and read each other's writing, they facilitate each other's development (Martinez & Teale, 1987).

When a very hesitant writer will not write without the teacher by his side, we can decentralize ourselves from the writing by referring the writer to another student for assistance. This can serve a dual purpose: 1). To get the child to depend more on his peers than on us, 2). To let other students be model writers and risk-takers for the child. This may eventually encourage the child to write for himself. Often, children learn faster from each other than from the teacher (Walshe, 1981).

Reading Their Writing

We can ask children, (while always accepting their refusal), to read what they've written no matter what form of writing they have used. By asking them to read their writing, we treat all attempts as written communication. Even when a child just draws when we ask him to write, we must encourage him to read it to us and treat his drawing as writing until the child tells us it is not (Sulzby, et al, 1989). Reading their writing helps children to view themselves as both writers and readers. Five year olds use different language and intonations when asked to read their writing than when asked to just tell about it (Martinez & Teale, 1987). They have learned, through literature being read to them, that book language sounds different than spoken language.

Sometimes a child cannot be present to read his writing to the intended audience. We may allow children to write their own way until the time comes when we know that

children will be sending their writing to others. Instead of resorting to writing a message on the board for children to copy, it may be better to allow children to maintain the ownership of their writing by writing a message in their own way. Children can then come and read it to an adult who provides a conventional representation of the child's rereading. This can be done on a sticky note instead of writing directly on the child's paper. We can explain to students that we wrote their writing in the way that an adult or older child could read it himself. In this way we show the children that we value their engagement in the whole writing process instead of merely practicing handwriting by copying someone else's message (Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

Sharing

When children first begin writing in the classroom, they need to share with their teacher fairly often. Allowing time for sharing writing is essential because to be remembered, kindergartners need to share their writing on the day it was written. (Martinez & Teale, 1987). Having an audience for one's writing helps to make it a purposeful activity and children grow as writers when they view their emergent writing as purposeful (Martinez, et al, 1989).

There are many ways we can create an audience for young writers. We can listen to them one on one or have them share with the entire class if they so choose. We can set the atmosphere for other children to honor one another's writing attempts (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). We must be a model for how to respond to others writing by being attentive while a student is sharing and giving the kind of positive feedback we would like others to give. Having students share in small groups may be a way to insure that everyone who wants to share has a chance to do so. This gives all students more opportunities to be both presenters of writing and audience for other's writing.

Displaying writing can be an effective way for children to share. Along with conventional print, children's writing in all forms can hang from walls and bulletin boards both inside and outside the classroom. This not only shows our students that we truly value their writing, but it gives their peers a chance to see written communication in various forms.

It is important to allow children to take their writing home on a regular basis or when the child feels so inclined. One study showed that when teachers kept all the children's stories, the children's writing was very sparse and shallow but when the stories were allowed to go home, children were motivated to write longer, more meaningful compositions (Strickland, & Morrow, 1989). We can always make copies of a child's writing that we really feel shows the development of the child as a writer.

Computers

Writing by hand can be incredibly hard work for beginners. They may be able write much easier and much more if we allow them to compose on a computer. The printed out results look so grown-up that youngsters feel even more pride in their work. Even

working at an old typewriter can help a child feel like they're doing more grown up writing (Fields and Spangler, 1995). Keyboard writing naturally forces a child, who may be reluctant or unable to write using alphabetic forms, to experiment with this type of writing. Using programs that combines both pictures and words such as Claris Works for Kids or KidPix can encourage even our most hesitant writers to take a stab at writing.

The Home-School Connection

Having a classroom full of confident writers requires teachers and parents to communicate frequently. We must work with parents to help them understand what we are trying to do and help them find ways to support it (Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990). Well-meaning parents often stifle creative growth in writing by insisting that their child use only adult forms (Dyson, 1985). Parents will encourage emergent writing if they understand two important ideas:

1. Writing non-conventionally represents a legitimate and important part of the child's progress toward literacy.
2. Growth toward literacy requires the opportunity to experiment and practice with written symbols in a non-pressured and responsive environment (Schwartz, 1989).

It can be very confusing to children to go between an environment that encourages them to depend on themselves for writing to one that encourages them to depend on others. This confusion can result in the child becoming fearful of not getting it right when they write in the classroom. Here are some ways that may strengthen the consistency between writing at home and at school:

1. Hold regular parent meetings to inform parents about your goals for children's writing.
2. Talk with parents individually if a child in your classroom does not view himself as a writer.
3. Create a newsletter or a brochure that briefly explains writing development and includes ways that parents can help their child at home.
4. Have a writing suitcase that goes home with one child each day. Stock it with all kinds of writing utensils and paper. Have the child share what he/she wrote at home the next day. This gives parents a chance to watch children as they write and gives them an opportunity to see a child's writing develop over the year right before their eyes (Martinez, 1989)!
5. Turn a classroom bulletin board or wall into a message center on which the children post message they composed at home. The teacher, (or other recipient), then responds to the message either orally or in writing (Martinez, 1989).

The following pages discuss how we implemented many of the ideas and principles presented in this research.

Description of the Process

From the beginning of school to mid January our kindergarten writing "program", consisted of a journal of blank pages for each child, a copy of an ABC chart, and teacher modeling of a journal entry each day before the students began their own journaling. We expected that they write their name, date (if they could), a picture, and some writing. We accepted all attempts at writing that was separate from the pictures (scribbles, letter like forms, phonemic attempts, etc.).

In January we began the Young Children and Literacy course. We began implementing writing into our play centers, such as writing pads by the phones, blank paper at the piano for song composing, and blank strips for student- written labels and signs. We also expanded our writing center and included a mailbox, valentines and valentine makings, and interesting stationery. We began to read and understand much more about the writings of young children. However, we noticed that we still had students who were hesitant about writing. We also noticed that many parents did not understand how young children learn to write. We noticed that many children were bringing writing from home that was conventionally spelled and perfectly copied. The parents were impressed with their child's "writing". They seemed to equate penmanship with composition. As a result we created a brochure answering some of the most common questions that parents have asked us, over the years, about their child's writing development (see appendix D).

As we collaborated on what we could do to help hesitant writers we decided, we would hone in on six different students. Criteria for selecting students for our project included:

1. Students who had a fear of writing and often remarked, "I can't write."
2. Students who had writing skills, but were still choosing not to write.

These are some areas that we strengthened, as we constructed knowledge about kindergarten writing with the help of professional literature and through close collaboration with each other. We are gaining a better understanding of the importance of the teacher's role in helping children become risk takers.

1. We now allow more time throughout the day for writing.
2. We have more realistic expectations for kindergarten writing. This has helped us to appreciate children's writing ability: no matter what form. We see that writing forms can be fluid and flexible. All forms of writing are a sign of growth.
3. We are learning to examine the underlying concepts that children may have in their various forms of writing.
4. We are learning the important effects of surrounding young writers with a literacy rich environment.
    - Added writing tables and a larger variety of writing utensils.
    - Posted additional labels and signs throughout the room.
    - Read more stories daily and made time for students to read emergent books to each other.
5. We are learning to celebrate all forms of writing.
    - Display writing.

- Allowing students to share writing outside the classroom.
- Let students choose to share writing daily.

6. We have been modeling other functions of writing besides a daily journal entry.
   - Writing a Get Well wish to a student.
   - Note to the Vet about our sick class pet.
   - Thank you note to field trip presenter.
   - Advertisement for kindergarten bake sale.
7. We have less reservation about taking dictation for students.
8. We take time to conference more with students about their writing.
9. We encourage peer collaboration.
   - Children work together on sound spelling.
   - Refer students to peers for the spelling of commonly used words.
10. We ask students to "read" their writing regardless of the form.
11. We allow students to use the computer for writing.
    - Word processing
    - Kid Pix
12. We encourage students to use writing for real/meaningful purposes.
    - Phone books
    - Invitations
    - Letters
    - Signs
    - Labels
13. We dialogued with parents of selected students.
    - Explaining forms of writing.
    - Ways to encourage and value writing at home.
    - Informing of student's progress.
    - Handed out the brochure, "*Let's Begin Writing...Write!*"

Collecting and Analyzing the Data.

We made a preliminary list of writing behaviors to observe in both the students and ourselves. We designed a form for keeping notes of the writing behaviors for selected students (see appendix A 1-2). We used the list for the first week (see appendix B 1-2). We found that there wasn't enough room to record observations. We began keeping anecdotal notes on blank paper (see appendix C). These notes included behaviors that were on our list as well as more detailed observation of what the child was doing during writing. These notes evolved into specific writing behaviors of the student. Rather than keeping track of teacher behaviors in writing on the charts or blank paper, we made mental notes of our efforts to help children. Although we know the importance of the teacher's role, we found ourselves fascinated with the child's behaviors to a point where we eliminated keeping track of what we did.

At the end of the project we compiled and analyzed the notes, composing a case study for each individual child. The case studies are listed below.

Case Study #1

Danielle was a reluctant writer for most of the year. She enjoyed drawing pictures but often avoided doing any other form of writing. When we talked with her about her picture and tried to encourage her to write some words, she would use her advanced verbal skills to change the topic and avoid talking about writing. Although she never really said that she couldn't write, we could tell from her behavior that she just didn't see herself as a writer. Consequently, we did not view her as a writer either and often shook our heads as we thought about how far behind she was compared to the other kids. We did not value where she was in the writing process.

As we began focusing on her by spending extra with her and more fully appreciating what she could do, she started to use random letters along with linear-repetitive forms. Spending more time with Danielle and paying closer attention as she read her writings showed that she had some advanced concepts of written language that we had never known before. When asked to read what she had written, she pointed to each symbol or letter as she went along the line of print with her finger from left to right. Because our growing understanding of how kindergartners write, we could truly begin to appreciate the development in Danielle's writing.

Danielle's purpose for writing seemed to increase each day . One example of this is the sign she has placed in the baby chicks' box (Figure 1A). When asked by another student what it said one student spoke up and replied, "Can't you read! It says, "Don't touch the chickens"." Peer interaction and acceptance is helping build Danielle's confidence in her writing abilities.

Another breakthrough for Danielle was the day she decided to write a letter to our principal. In the past, we felt that only the invented spelling was worth sending down to the principal and now after understanding the writing process our thoughts have changed. This was definitely a breakthrough for us, because we had promised to value all writing. So down to the principal Danielle went with her letter (Figure 1B). She read her letter of random letters mixed with some linear forms while pointing to each symbol as she moved her finger across the lines of print. Our principal was so excited about her abilities and he asked if he could keep her letter and then helped her post her letter on his office wall. Danielle was truly valued

At the end of our four-week study of Danielle's writing, we noticed great growth. We noticed that her writing now contained only random letters. There was no sign of letter-like forms. She also started including elaborate illustrations that accompanied her writing. A good example of this is the day she began writing intensively on the white board. When we noticed her great pictures and writing and wanted her to record this story in some way. When we asked her if she would like to write her story in a book she said she felt she didn't have enough space in her journal or on one piece of paper to tell about her trip to Anchorage (see Front Cover). Danielle's statement, "My story is too big to tell because we went all the way to Anchorage", is an excellent example of Ferreiro's quantatative principle. Children would stop by to ask about her story. She was so excited to share what had happened on her trip to Anchorage. Every time she would read what she had written, the story stayed the same. Getting positive reinforcement from her peers about what she had to write and say, allowed her stories to take off. It suddenly dawned on us that we could take a picture of her drawing as a way to record her story. It's great to have this visual record of this important event in her writing development.

We know that Danielle will continue to grow with confidence as a writer. It has been a wonderful experience to watch her grow and be able to truly appreciate what she can do.

Figure 1A

"Do not touch the chickens."

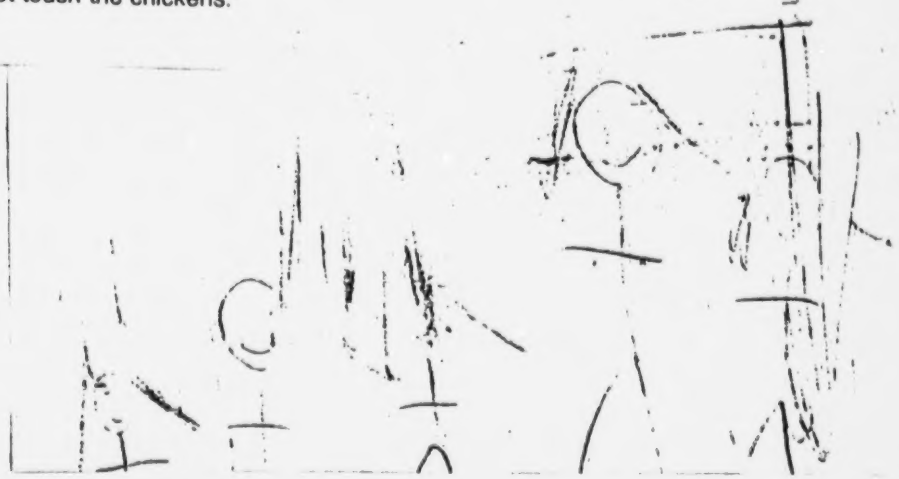
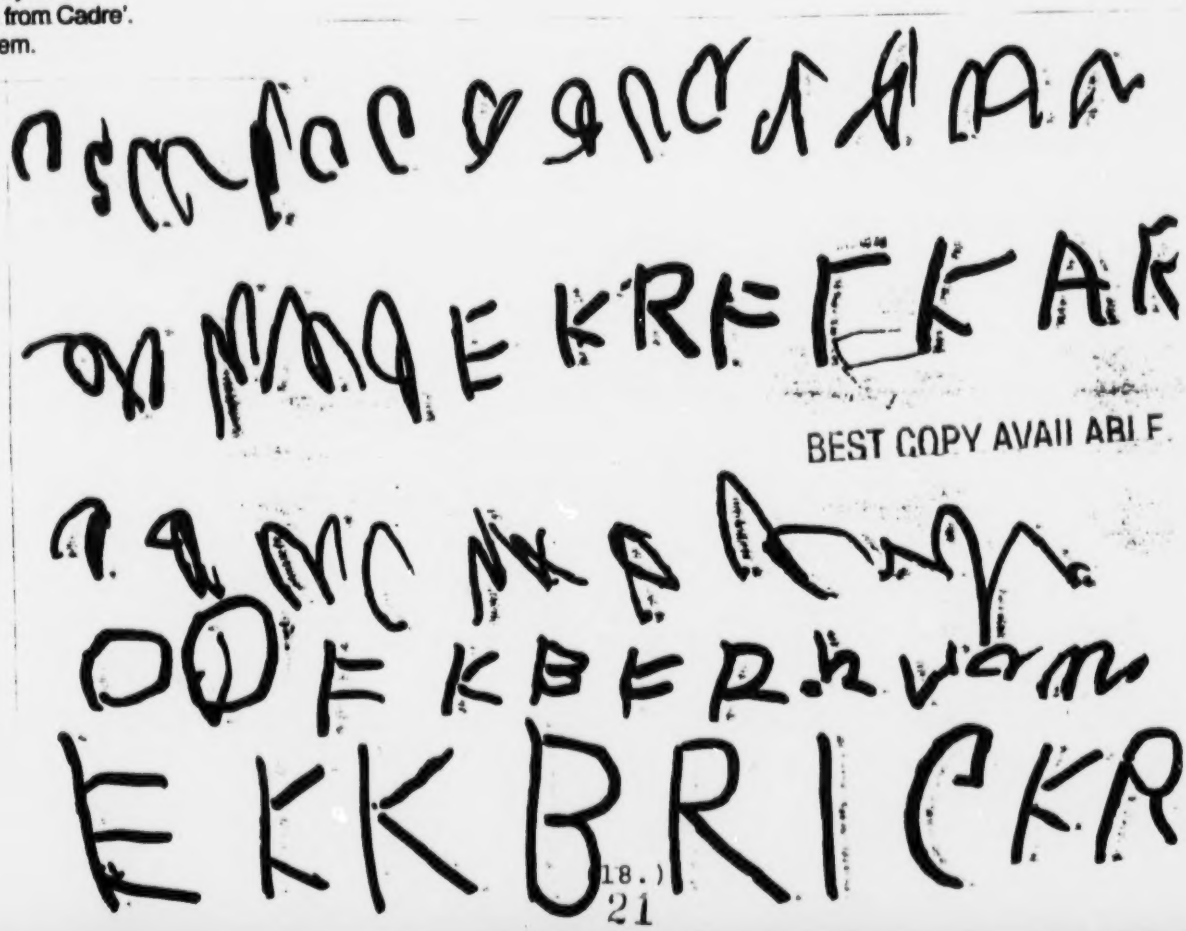


Figure 1B

We have chickens that are adopted.
We like them.
They are very cute.
They came from Cadre'.
We love them.



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Case Study #2

Dalt has been in the drawing stage of his writing development all year. As we started to spend more time with him we noticed he began stretching his writing ability. One of Dalt's strengths is his great artistic ability in the kindergarten. Dalt has a story for every picture, so the first step was to write for him as he dictated his story. After Dalt felt comfortable with writing (letters & words) his drawings started to have writing included, mainly environmental print. A good example of this was the day he was trying to decide how to spell the word "to." As if thinking to himself, he reasoned that he knew how to spell "to", then went over to the chart that had the numbers one to ten printed on it. From the chart he decided that "to" was spelled "two." He was so excited that he could find out how to spell a word on his own. By accepting his abilities we were valuing his writing that continued to grow.

One day Dalt decided to write a story in a small notebook with lined paper. What was so interesting was this was a letter without any drawings. The print he used was mainly linear-repetitive with some standard writing. The purpose of his letter was telling Haley that he would come to her house and stay over. He asked Haley if she would like to listen to his letter and she sat quietly while Dalt read what he had written. (Figure 2A). After reading each small page he would turn the page over on the desk. And read the next. His letter was seven pages long!

At the end of the day we were discussing how Dalt had used a form of writing that we had not seen him use before. His grandmother was present and shared that he *always* writes with her. She explained that they always used lined paper. This brought up a new question of whether lined paper or plain paper was a factor in his writing development. The next day Dalt was asked if he would like to use lined paper during writing time. He said it didn't matter to him and proceeded to start writing. At first he was sounding out words and placing them on the lines left to right. Then as the time progressed he started to draw pictures surrounding the writing.

Collaboration between Dalt and Dalton G. is becoming a daily event. As they are both becoming comfortable with their own writing they enjoy helping each other. On the last week of our observation it was decided that we would encourage them to ask others in the class for help with sounding out words instead of helping them. With collaboration the two Daltons were able to spell out Minnesota with only a few unrecognizable letters (Figure 2B). They were so proud of themselves for working on Minnesota together! What better teachers are there in a classroom?

Dalt is continuing to grow in his writing. Each day is a new adventure with him when it comes to writing and expressing himself. With the little bit of encouragement given, by taking ownership in his writing and valuing what is written Dalt is well on his way to becoming a risk taker.

(Figure 2B). They were so proud of themselves for working on Minnesota together! What better teachers are there in a classroom?

Dalt is continuing to grow in his writing. Each day is a new adventure with him when it comes to writing and expressing himself. With the little bit of encouragement given, by taking ownership in his writing and valuing what is written Dalt is well on his way to becoming a risk taker.

Figure 2A

Letter to Haley.

Figure 2B

"Minnesota"

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Case Study #3

Tyler has been a reluctant writer. His writing and drawings were still in the scribble stage when we first started our observations. Writing would only happen when he was willing to sit still long enough to draw. When discussing our project with his parents we asked if Tyler was writing at home. His parents replied that Tyler wrote all the time at home. When they brought some samples in, the revelation was apparent. What we saw were words formed correctly and on the lines. We asked the parents if they knew the different stages that Tyler would go through to become a successful writer. After discussion of how they could help Tyler, the growth started.

His first writings continued to be in the scribble and drawing stages. When asked if he would like to dictate he would make up something that didn't pertain to his drawings. It seemed this was more for our benefit than his. Then, as we continued valuing his work, his abilities started to show. The pictures became something recognizable and also had a purpose in the writing. Random letter and beginning phonetic spelling started to show up in his daily writing (Figure 3A). As we placed value on his work and encouraged him, his abilities started to take off.

One thing we noticed was that he constantly writes about war, guns, bad guys, blood and guts (Figure 3B). It was never suggested that he try other ideas but other interests were presented to him daily. He would always revert back to the bad guys in his writing but the progress in the writing was noticeable. Because adults value his writing, he is on his way to enjoying the writing process.

Simplified phonetic spelling started showing up more often. Also the drawings were becoming more complex and meaningful to the writing. Tyler is starting to feel comfortable sharing his drawings and writing. Through our encouragement, placing value on his writings, and accepting his work Tyler is building his knowledge to becoming a real risk taker. During our observations we saw a little boy go from not sitting still or taking interest in his writing, to a little boy that gets his journal or writing out first thing when he comes into the room.

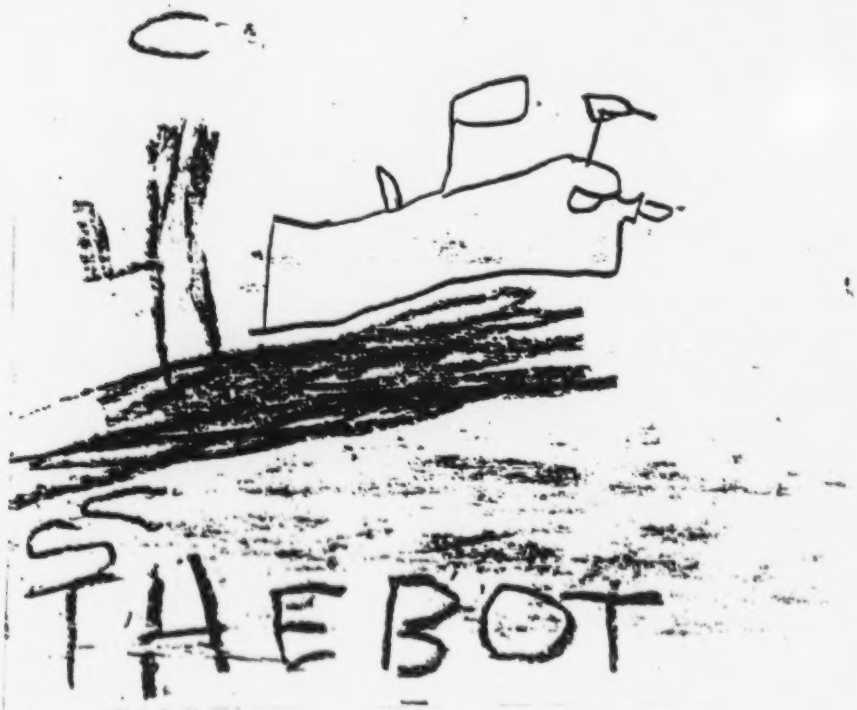

Figure 3A

"The boat"

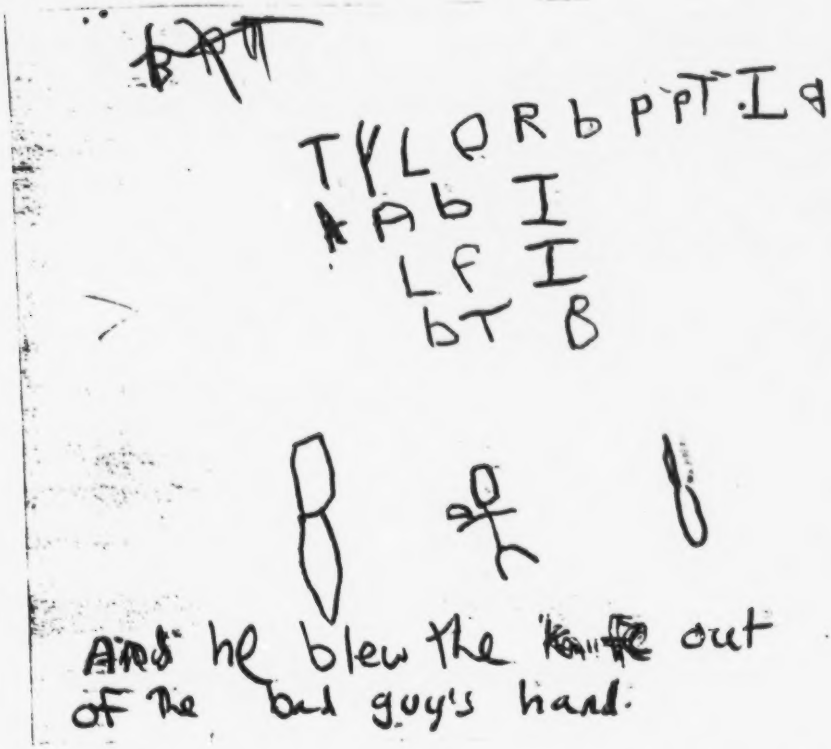

Figure 3B

And he blew the knife out of the bad guy's hand.

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Case Study #4

John Michael is another reluctant writer who we decided to observe. Even with spending more time and accepting what he was writing, the progress has been slow (Figure 4A). He seems to be more interested in what others are drawing and writing. When asked if he would like to dictate his story for someone, he puts little effort into it.

On one occasion we did see progress. John Michael asked for help spelling words. As the words were being sounded out for him he could hear the basic sounds and he wrote with simplified phonetic form. When he had completed the sentence he asked if the words were right. He was asked if he could read his sentence. He slowly read back what had been written, when finished he was so excited that he could make sense of his own writing (Figure 4B). It was such a big step in his writing he wanted to call his mom and tell her he could read and write. After talking to his mother and telling her that he could spell now he went back to his writing with new confidence. At the end of the day we felt this was going to be the big breakthrough for John Michael and his writing but it wasn't.

From that point on no matter what we tried nothing seemed to bring back the light we had seen for one fleeting moment. Even with encouragement, one on one, valuing his efforts, or suggesting he collaborate with others the progress is slow. When we discuss John Michael and how we can help him to become a writer our ideas and suggestions are almost to an end. What we have come to understand or believe is that John Michael isn't ready to believe in his abilities when it comes to writing. Through valuing his work, keeping parents updated, offering open writing activities, one-on-one support, and giving him more time to write we are more hopeful that John Michael will begin to feel comfortable in his writing.

Figure 4A

"Dragon"

Figure 4B

I went to wrestling.

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Case Study # 5

Briana has been a hesitant writer for most of the year. In fact, her writing showed little change from August through January. She most often drew shapeless forms using many different colors of crayon. She verbally labeled them: "rainbow dog", "rainbow flowers", "This is a tornado." There seemed to be a lot of tornadoes and rainbow things (Figure 5A). In the beginning of the year, Briana was somewhat willing to draw and verbally label her writing. However, when we began asking her to "write" about her pictures she began the unconfident behavior that made her a candidate for our research. Briana would tell us she couldn't write, that her finger had a sore, or she'd try to hide her work. At the time, her lack of progress was very worrisome.

As we began gaining knowledge about young children's writing and implementing ideas such as valuing all her forms of writing, allowing her to write letters to the principal, and make books with markers, we began to see changes in Briana's writing. She seemed to enjoy letter writing and sending valentines to family members and friends. She began writing "Ilovu" on the cards and letters. She signed her name as well, which she never liked doing in her journal. Briana has chosen to write at the writer's workshop everyday since it opened (in April). At first she chose to write letters to people, especially the principal. One day she wanted to "sound spell" his name so we sat together with another friend, Mandy, and came up with "MSREPRSN" (Mr. Epperson). She also wrote "Ilovu" and drew a rainbow. We were very encouraged. She enjoys sharing her writing, reading it to anyone who will listen. She has written many letters to the principal using mostly sound spelling or invented spelling. She has drawn pictures to him, as well. We would have worried about the picture with no "writing" just weeks ago, but now we know drawing is a form of writing. Drawing is absolutely normal and appropriate for kindergarten writing. Recently, Briana has begun writing in the blank books. She is currently working on two books, "TECHRS" (teachers)(Figure 5B) and a letter in book form to "MSREPRSN" (Mr. Epperson)(Figure 5C).

Briana's parents are supportive of her efforts and have celebrated her attempts to communicate through writing.

We found that once we gave Briana more freedom to write what was meaningful to her, and learned to value all the forms of writing that she used, she was released from her fear and willing to take risks with writing.

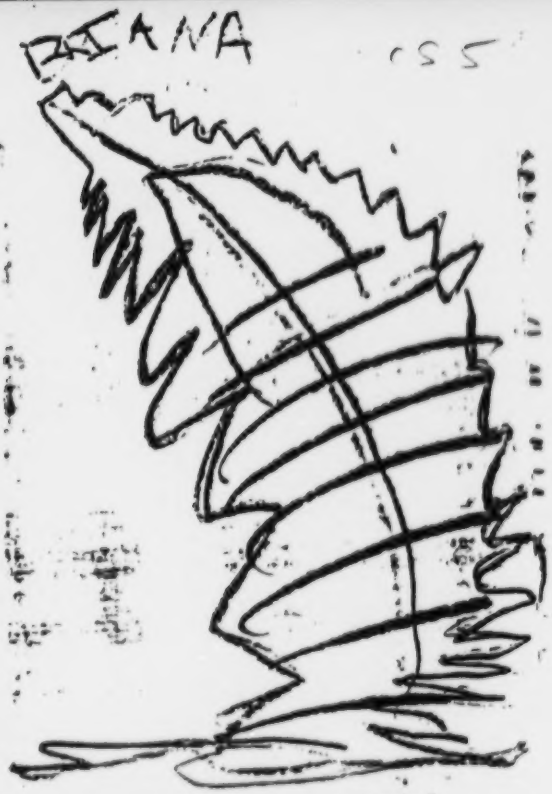


Figure 5A "A rainbow tornado."

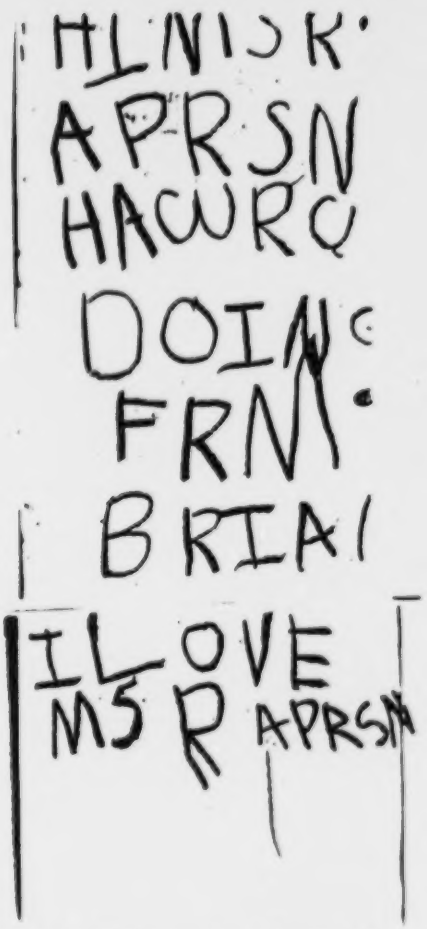


Figure 5C "Hi Mr. Epperson, How are you doing? From Briana. I love Mr. Epperson."

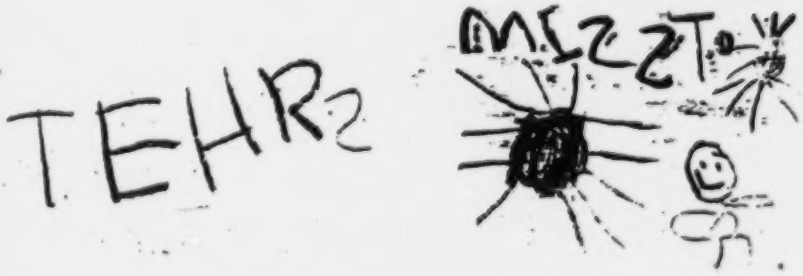
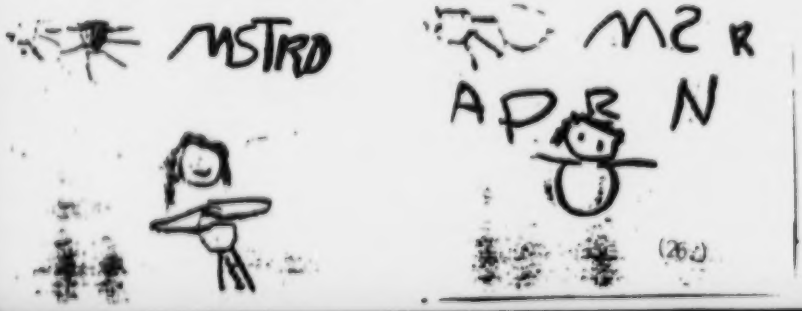


Figure 5B "Teachers, Miss T., Mrs.Stroh, Mr. Epperson"



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Case Study #6

Raychel has been a hesitant writer for most of the year. She entered kindergarten saying she couldn't read or write. We encouraged drawing just because it was *something*. She seemed to enjoy drawing. Her drawings were detailed and colorful. She had a story for each one. When we began observing her for our project, Raychel was still drawing (Figure 6A). We asked her to write some writing along with her picture. She would always respond, "But I don't know how to write." We understood why she believed this statement: she knows very few letters and almost no letter sounds. For Raychel, writing is sounding out words and writing the letters for the sounds that one can hear, just as we have modeled all year. She knows she won't be successful doing what we have modeled as writing, so she avoids writing.

For the past several months, at home, she had been writing letters to her dad who was working far away. She would write "love", "Dad" and draw big hearts. When writer's workshop opened in our room, Raychel was very excited about writing letters to the principal. On the first day of our project observation, she drew a great big colorful heart and wanted to take it down to him. I asked her to "put some writing" on the paper. She said, "But I don't know how to write." I said I would help her. We sat down together. Through much effort she managed to match a letter with some of the sounds in, "You are my friend."(Figure 6B). I was very encouraged. Sadly, when all was said and done, Raychel didn't want to take it down to the principal's office. At the time, we couldn't figure out why she didn't go. Now, after all the research, observations, and collaboration with my colleagues, we see we were the problem. Raychel did not feel valued as a writer, therefore; she did not value her writing.

About a week later, we had a conference with Raychel. We talked to her about the wonderful stories she writes in her drawings. We let her know that we would love to write her stories for her and that we called this type of writing dictation. We asked her if she wanted me to take dictation that day. She did not. We were disappointed. She drew with the stencils that day, and several days after that.

Our school requires a quarterly writing assessment. The assessment fell during our project observation time. Every child is given a blank piece of paper. (Each can choose to write to the stimulus or write on a topic of his/her choosing.) The only requirement for this assessment is that they do the writing alone. Raychel drew a picture but would write nothing. She kept saying, "I can't write. I don't know how to write." We encouraged her to write any way she knew how. Raychel was so discouraged she began to cry. At that point encouraging her to do it herself had gone too far. We consoled her and dictated what she wanted to write. Raychel is much less enthusiastic about writing now.

Since Raychel has seemed so discouraged about writing, we have made extra efforts to value any attempt at writing, including drawing. We seek opportunities for her to share what she writes and conference with her each day. Our efforts are paying off, little, by little. The last two days of our observation, Raychel began working on a book to Mr.

Epperson. She drew some stencil pictures, labeled with beginning sounds and allowed me to dictate a portion of her letter(Figure 6 C). She shared her writing with a small group of friends who were also writing to Mr. Epperson. We feel very responsible for Raychel's hesitancy and can see how we have failed her throughout this year. I am so glad we have learned about the role the teacher plays in the young child's development as a writer. We must value every attempt at writing, celebrate each form used, conference one-on-one, and help students find forums for sharing. We are sorry for Raychel and we will do our very best to encourage her appropriately for the rest of the year.

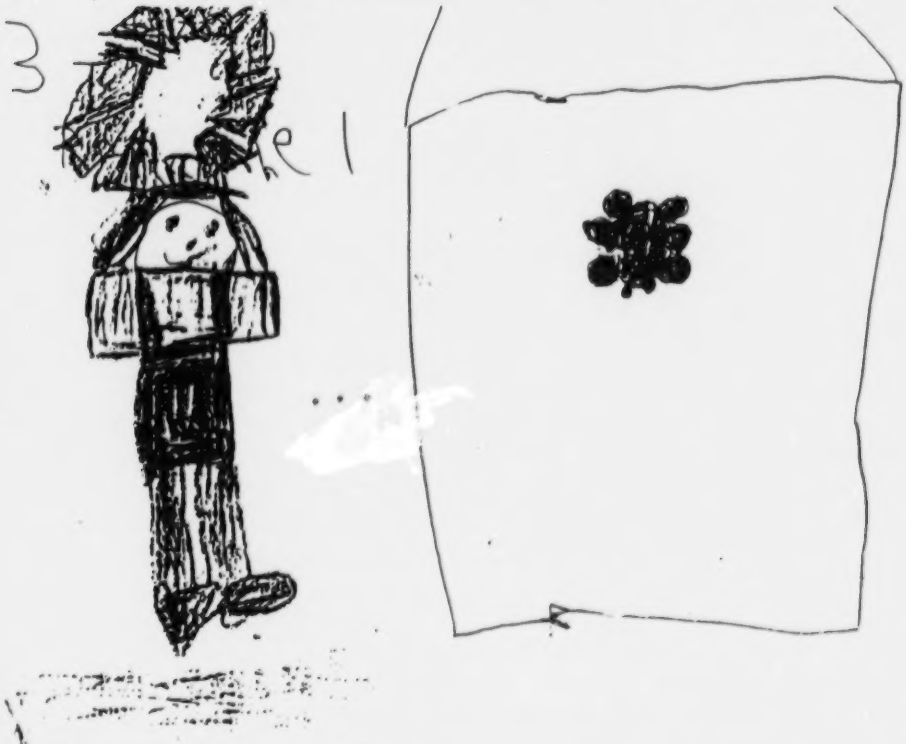

Figure 6A "Me at my house."

Figure 6B "I love you. You are my frier

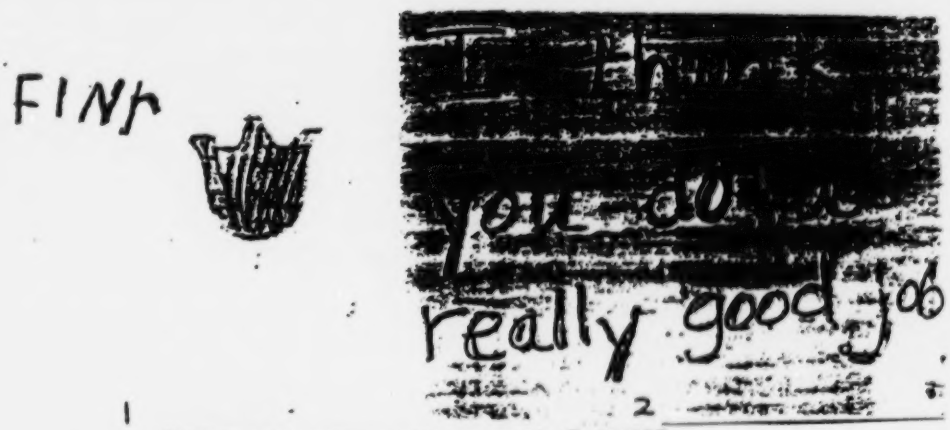

Figure 6C "Flower" Dictation to Mr. Epperson.

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Results of our Project

The most important result has been the increase in our understanding of the development of young children's writing. We have found the teacher's role to be the most significant factor in encouraging hesitant writers. Providing a print-rich, pressure free environment, plenty of time to write, celebration of different forms, getting parents involved, fostering independence, taking dictation, and modeling different types of writing are all ways that we found to encourage young children to write. We discovered that all the things we did to encourage our hesitant writers benefited all students in our classrooms. We found that the child's belief in him/herself as a writer was the most important factor to his/her success as a writer. The child's belief was based, in part, on the teacher's perception of the child's ability and the teacher's understanding of the development of young writers, the classroom climate, and use of appropriate strategies for encouraging writing.

Through our research we were reminded of the huge impact parents have on the child's, view of him/herself as a writer. Thus far, we have had a favorable response to our informative writing brochure, "*Let's Start Writing... Write!*"

Overall we are very happy with the results. We have observed more writing, writing progress and risk taking than ever before. The students seem more engaged in and proud of their writing. We believe this progress is attributed to our newly constructed understanding of kindergarten children's writing. We are more enthusiastic about our students writing and see that they are more enthusiastic as well.

The questions we still have:

- To what degree should a kindergarten writer depend on a more capable writer for sound spelling?
- What else can we do to encourage and educate parents to value their child's writing, regardless of what stage of development?
- What should we do when students say they are finished writing when there are still opportunities and time to write?
- What responsibilities do the students have for finding meaningful/purposeful reasons to write?
- How do we get students to write on more appropriate topics when they write about guns, violence, or other negative topics without causing the student to doubt his/her ability to choose appropriate writing topics?

Conclusion

As the end of the kindergarten year comes to a chose, we reflect back on our students as beginning writers and look at the progress they have made. How we view that progress is crucial to our understanding about how children learn to become literate; "The most important academic idea for children to learn is that writing and reading can be useful communication tools and satisfying activities. Even more important is that each child learns to believe in his or her ability to be successful with these tools"(Fields & Spangler, 1995, p178).

After working so hard to provide a nurturing and accepting environment for writing, we often worry that our students will find themselves in the 1st grade classroom that will look only at what a child does not know instead of building on what he does know about writing. We wonder what will happen to these students and, if perhaps, our efforts have all been in vain. We can rest assured that if we have done our best to help our students view themselves as readers and writers they,"... will perform better, even in the most restrictive classrooms than children who do not share these characteristics" (Mills & Clyde, p59). After all we have done, we can send these children on with confidence because we know that kindergartners reared in a literate culture supported by our own classroom can, and will, continue to write (Sulzby & Barnhart, 1990).

We have found this to be a beneficial project. Although our project focused on the hesitant writers we found that what we do to help these children become risk takers in writing can benefit all writers. We feel that what we've learned about children's writing will help many of our future students to become risk takers. Perhaps the most important thing we have learned is that a *child* must view him/herself as a writer, and what the teacher does to support the child's view is crucial to that view. We found we had to make a shift in paradigms before our students could become more confident writers. And because of this change in our perspective, perhaps our question would be better stated, "How can we help kindergarten children to view themselves as writers?"

We are looking forward to beginning next school year with our new understandings. We're anxious to implement the new ideas we have presented in this research project.

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Appendix A-1

Original Observation Records

	Tyler	Raychel	Briana
Types			
Forms			
During Play			
Symbolic representa			
Independ-ence			
celebrated			
dictation			
Parent involve			
Teacher mistakes			
Suggestion to write			

Appendix A-2

Original Observation Records

	Dalt J	John Michael	Danielle
Types			
Forms			
During Play			
Symbolic representa			
Independ-ence			
Celebra-tions			
Dictation modeling			
Parent involve			
Teacher mistakes			
Suggestion to write			

	~~Dalt~~ Tyler	John Michael	Danielle
Types	4-13 Journal 4-16 Book	4-13- Letter Mr. Person	4- [illegible] Book
Forms		## [illegible] 4-[illegible]	Linear forms same basic letters. 4-15
During Play			
Symbolic representa	Pictures Told story of superman beating up a bigman 4-17		
Independence			
Celebrations			
Dictation modeling	4-13 Journal "This is Dr Dee pers and	Phone #s from others doing article - the [illegible] teaching them [illegible]	
Parent involve			
Teacher mistakes			
Suggestion to write		He [illegible] be drawing monsters 4-16-	
Art	4-14- Bd [illegible] Journal		
	4-15		

4-15 Journal - [illegible]

" - [illegible]

4-16 Book

" Bones " (15 pgs - [illegible])

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Original Observation Records with Notes

4-13 - 4-17

	[redacted] Briana	Raychel	[redacted] Tyler
Types			
Forms	Drawing some random letters	Drawing	
During Play		4-13 Drawing. 4-17 stencils 4-16 Stencils	
Symbolic representa			
Independence		- Very dependent 4-16 sits by me	
celebrated	Hung letter in office		
dictation		4-17 offered dictation ~~Stencils~~ "No"	
Parent involve	4-13 conference w/ parents very		
Teacher mistakes	Supportive!	4-13 Forcing the sound spelling...	
Suggestion to write		4-13 [redacted] put writing on letter	
Sharing	small group and Mr. E	4-13 Would not share with Mr. E.	

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Appendix C

Anecdotal Notes

4-17

Briana * Worked with Mandy to write letter to Mr. E.
* invented spelling "Msrcpr.sn" "I lik u"
* shared w/ group then Mr. E.
* good to see her working with a friend! —peer collaboration

Raychel 4-30-98

* stencils of animals + flowers, colored
* shared w/ small group, read each shape
* asked if she'd like to hang in room. —taped to door.

4-24-98

Danielle is collaberating with Serria today. they are writing a book about friendship.
Mrs. Martin took dictation for the girls.
Danielle said: "I'm writing me and Serria's friend book."

Dalton J + G are using lined paper with random lllll. then asked to read they collaberate on what they say. Dalton G. has written music notes on the page because his drawing is about Batman & he writing a song. Batman—Batm

Dalton J. lllll on line paper. then drawing on other side

Tyler J. Men in Black pictures. Letter like forms used. (made of picture)

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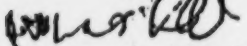
Forms of Writing

Scribbling

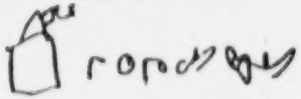


(I want to sleep over at your house, Heidi.)

Drawing

(Santa Claus)

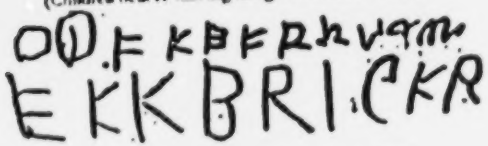
Letter-Like



(My house is a log house)

Random Letters/ Quantitative Principle

(Children believe that big things have more letters.)



(We have two chickens in our class.)

Simplified Phonics

(Please take little Joey's books.)

Invented Spelling

(The boat)

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Helping Your Young Child Become A Writer

Sterling Elementary School

Sterling, Alaska

Appendix D

Questions Parents Ask

When should my child begin writing?

Whenever your child begins to pick up a crayon and scribble, s/he is beginning to write.

You mean scribbling is writing?

Yes. Scribbling and other early forms of writing are ways that children make sense of the written word.

How do I teach my child to write?

Learning to read and write is a complex process. However, it is clear that children learn to write best through discovery and play.

Shouldn't my child read before s/he writes?

Not necessarily. Writing and reading are connected. The more your child writes, the more s/he will learn about reading and the more s/he reads, the more s/he will learn about writing.

Isn't copying words writing?

Copying is a form of writing for young children. However, when children write on their own they show what they are learning about writing. They get a big boost in confidence, which helps them become more willing to try again and again.

What kind of writing should I see my child doing in kindergarten?

The most common forms of writing in kindergarten are scribbling, drawing, random letters, copying print around the room and simplified phonics.

When will my child be able to write correctly?

In the early years your child will use many forms of writing, building on his/her knowledge as s/he grows and develops. Your child will also be motivated toward adult writing because of the need to communicate with others.

How You Can Help

• Read to your child daily.

•Make sure your child has access to many books and other reading materials for exploration.

•Create a pleasant, playful, non-pressured atmosphere for writing.

•Allow your child to choose when to write.

•Let your child see you write often.

•Have a variety of writing utensils and paper within reach.

•Let your child write in his/her way.

.•Encourage your child to write with you.

•Provide lots of opportunities for your child to write.

•Celebrate your child's writing in any form.

•Display your child's writing.

•Share your child's writing with others.

Writing Ideas

♦Write notes or letters to family members and friends.

♦Make lists with your child (TV, grocery, phone, chores, wish list).

♦Write a story together, taking turns writing words and drawing pictures.

♦Write captions for photo albums.

♦Write invitations or greeting cards.

♦Decorate a tee-shirt using fabric markers or paints.

♦Write messages in pudding for dessert.

♦Label lots of things in the house.

♦Write or draw about a favorite book or story.

♦Create and write recipes.

♦Write or draw in a personal journal.